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The Comical
H I S T O R Y
O F
SIMPLE JOHN,
AND HIS
Twelve Misfortunes;

Which happened all in Twelve Days after the
unhappy Day of his Marriage.

Giving a particular ACCOUNT of his Courtship
and Marriage, to a Scolding WIFE; which
has been a mortifying Misery to many a Poor
MAN.



E D I N B U R G H:

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The Comical HISTORY of SIMPLE JOHN and his Twelve MISFORTUNES.

SIMPLE JOHN was a widow's son, and a coarse country weaver to his trade; he made nothing but such as canvas for chaff beds, corn and coal sacks, druggin and barn were the finest webs he cou'd lay his fingers to: he was a great lump of a lang lean lad, aboon six feet high afore he was aughteen year auld, and as he said himsel', he grew so fast, and was in sic a hurry to be high, that he did not stay to bring a' his judgment wi' him, but yet he hoped it would follow him, and he would meet wi' as mony a ane does, after they're married; he had but ae siller, and she had as little sense as hissel', she was married on sleeky Willy, the wyhe weaver, his mother was a rattling rattle soul'd wife, and they liv'd a' in ae house, and every body held them as a family of fools. When John came to man's state, to the age of twenty-one years, he telt'd his mither he would ha'e a wife of some sort, either young or auld, widow or lair, if they had but head and hips, tongue and tith, he shou'd tak them, and well I wat mither, quoth he, they'll get a lump- ing pennyworth o' me, tak me wha will.

His mither tells him o' the black butcher on Tiviot-side, who had three dochters, and every aye o' them had something, there was Kate, Ann, and Cirzy, had hunder marks a-piece, Kate and Ann had both bastards. Cirzy the eldest had a hump back, a high breast, baker legs, a short wry neck, thrawn mouth, and goggle eye'd, a perfect Aesop of the female kind, with as many crooked conditions within as without, a very lump of loun like ill-nature, row'd a' together, as if she had been nine months in a haggis, a second edition of crook'd-back'd Richard, an old English king, that was horn wi' teeth to bite a' round about him; and yet the wight gae'd mad to be married.

John's mither telt'd him the road where to go, and what to say, and accordingly he sets out wi' his Sunday's coat on, and a' his braws, and a pair o' new pillonian breeks o' his mither's making. In he comes and telt'd his errand before he would sit down, says good-day to you goodman, what are ye a' doing here? I'm wanting a wife, and ye're a fletcher, and has a gude sorting aside you; my mither says ye can fair me, or ony body like me; what say ye titt' goodman, how many dochters ha'e ye? are they a married yet? I wad fair tak a look o' some o' them, gin ye like.

A wow, said the goodwife, come in my honest lad and rest ye, an ye be a wooer sit down and gi's a snuff; A deed good- wife, I ha'e nae mills but my mither's, and it's at home. A whar an ye, Ple no ken ye. I wat quoth he, my name's Jock Sande-



man, they ca' me simple John the sack-weaver, I hae nae tocher but my loom, a pirn-wheel, a kettle pat, a brass pan, twa piggs, four cogs and a candlestick, a good cock, a cat, twa errocks new be-run to lay; my sister Sara is married on sleeky Willie the wylie weaver, and I maun hae a hagwife or my mither die, for truly she's very frail, and ony haile o' health she has is about dinner time; what say ye till't goodman? can ye byckle me or no?

Goodman. A dear John, ye're in an unco haste, ye wadna hae you're wife hame wi' ye? they're a' three before ye, which o' them will ye tak?

Hout'tout, says John, ony o' them 'ill sare me, but my mither says there's twa o' them has fau'ts. And what is their fau'ts, said the goodwife? Is it, said John, it's nae mair fau't, but I dinna like it, they got men or they were married. And what shall I do wi' them, said the goodman?

John.) Ad-ded goodman as ye're ay dealing among dead beasts and living beasts. I wad put them awa' among ither beasts, or gin ye be aun ony penny, let some body tak them up o' desperate debt, I wad slay the fikes frae them, they anger'd you and sham'd you baith wi' their bastards, a wheen dast jades it gets men or they be married, and bairns or they get bridals.

Goodwife.) A wat well that's true lad.

Gezzy.) A weel John than, will ye tak me, I hae nae bastards, how will ye and I do,

John.) I wadna gin ye be able to get a bastard, yet ye may ha'e some war fau't; but ye maun be my pennyworth, for ye're unc' little, and I'm o'er muckle, and gin ye an' I were ance cairded thro' ither, we nae get bonny weans o' midlen mak; I ha'e nae fau'ts to ye, but ye ha'e a high breast, a hump back, a short neck, and high shoulders, the hands and legs may do, tho' your mouth be a wee to the tae side, it will ly well to the rock, and I ha'e a hantie o' tow to spin, will be baith socks and socks till us, ye'll be my fussy dauty up and down; a perfect beauty, wi' cats yellow een, black brows, and red lips, and your very nose is a purpy colour, ye hae nae fau'ts at a'; now when will we be married.

Gezzy.) Na, ha, John lad, we maun think on that yet.

John.) What the yellow lass, shouldna ye be ready when I'm ready, and every body says the women's ay ready.

Goodman.) Ye'll ha'e to come back, and bring somebody wi' you, and we'll gree about it, and set the day when ye'll be married.

John.) A weel goodman, I'll tell my mither o't, and come back on munanday, and we'll hae a chappin o' ale and roasted cheese on the gude chance o't, but I maun hae a word o' the bride out-by to convey me, an' a quiet speak to herself about it.

Goodwife.) A wow na John, the daft louns will laugh at you, and she'll think shame, gang ye out-by, and she'll speak to you through the gavel window.

Out goes John, and the bride and her twa sisters goes to the window within to hear the diversion, and what he would say. Now, says John, Girzy my dear, my braw pretty woman, an ye be in earnest tell me, for by my fu' he I'm no scorning.

Girzy.) Indeed John I'm very willing to tak you, but ye needna tell every body about it.

John.) Than gie me a bit kifs on that ? He shuts his head in at the window, making a lang neck, to win down to her, and she stood on a little stool to win up to him ; O, cries he, an ye were good flesh I could eat you ;, I like yon sae well, it's a pity there is sic a hard wa' a tween us, I'll tell my mither sae bonny as ye're, O gie me anither kifs yet an then I'll go : one o' her sisters standing by in a dark corner, gets ha'd o' a cows head which wanted a' the skin but about the mouth, and shuts it out towards his mouth, which he kiss'd in the dark O, cried he, but your mouth be could face I kiss'd yop last, and I think ye has a beard, I saw nae that afore, or it's wi' spinning tow, that maks your mouth sae rough at e'en.

Hame he comes, and tells his mither the speed and properties of the marriage. A' things was got ready, and next week sleeky Willie the weaver and him came to gree the marriage, and stay a night wi' the bride, and teach John gude manners, for whan John was hungry, he minded his meat more than his gude behaviour ; and as he was never fu' till the dish was tome, Willie the weaver was to tramp on his fit when he thought he had supped enough ; so all things being agreed upon short and easy terms, and the wedding-day sett, they were to be three times cry'd on Sunday, and quietly married on Munanday, neither piper nor fidler to be employed, but sweith awa' hame frae the minister, and into the bed among the blankets ; ha, ha, cries John, that's the best o't a'.

Now every thing being concluded as propos'd, and supper was brought, a large fat haggies, the very smell would done a hungry body gude, but John had got only twa or three soups, until ane o' the butcher's meikle dog tramped on John's fit, which he took to be the weaver, and then he would sup no more. After supper they went to bed ; John and the weaver lay together, and then he abus'd the weaver for tramping sae soon, which he denied : But O, said John, there's a hantle o't left, and I saw where it was set, they're a sleeping, I'll go rise and tak a soup o't yet : ay, een do sae said sleeky Willie, and bring a soup to me too : away then John goes to the amry, and lays to the haggies, till his ain haggies cou'd had nae mair, then

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brings the rest to sleeky Willie, but instead of going to the bed where he was, goes to the bed where the bride and her twa sisters lay, but they being fast asleep, he speaks slowly, will ye tak it, will ye tak it? but they making no answer, he turns up the blankets to put a soup into Willie's mouth, but instead of doing so, he puts a great spoonful close to one of their backsides! sleeky Willie hears all that past, comes out o' the bed, and sups out the remainder, and sets up the dish where it was, leaves the amry door open to let the cats get the blame of supping the haggies, and awa' they goes to bed, but poor John could get nae sleep for drouth, up he gets in search of the water can, and finding an empty pitcher, puts in his hand to find if there was any water in it, but finding none, he closed his hand, when it was within the pitcher, and then could not get it out, goes to the bed and tells sleeky Willie what had happened him, who advised him to open the door and go out to a knocking-stane that stood before the door, and break it there, to get out his hand, and not to mak a noise in the house, so out he goes: but the bride's sister, who had gotten the great spoonful of the haggies laid to her backside, was out before him, rubbing the nastiness (as she took it to be) off the tail of her skirt, and she being in a louting posture, he took her for the knocking-stane, and comes o'er her hurdies with the pitcher, till it flew in pieces about her, then off she runs wi' the fright, round a turf stack and into the house before him, John comes in trembling to the bed again wi' the fright, praying to preserve him, for sic a knocking-stane he never saw, for it ran clean awa' when he brack the pigg upon it.

Now John was furnished in a house by his father-in-law, the bed, loom, heddles, treadles, thrums, reeds, and pirn wheel, was a brought and set up, before the marriage, which was kept as a profound secret; so that John got the first night of his ain wife, and his ain house a' at ae time: So on the next morning after the marriage, John and his wife made up some articles, how they were to work, and keep house: John was to hold the house in meat, meal, fire, and water; Girzy was to mak the meat and keep the house in clothes; the father-in-law to pay their rent for three years, they were to hae no servants, until they had children, and the first child was to be a John, after its ain daddy, get it wha will, if a boy; and if a girl, Girzy, after its minny, as he said, wha had wrought best for't.

I. Then she ordered John to rise and begin his work, by putting on a fire, and tak the twa new piggs, and gang to the well: No sooner had John opened the door, and gone out with a pigg in every hand, than a' the boys and girls being gathered in a crowd to see him, gave a loud huzza, and clapping their

hands at him; poor John not knowing what it meant, thought it was fine sport, began to clap his hands too, and not minding the two pigs, clashes t's tane against the tither, till baith went in pieces, and that was a chearful huzza, to baith euld and young that was looking at him. Girzel, the wife draw him into the house, and to him she flies with the wick-d wife's weapons, her tongue and tangs, made his ribs to crack, saying, They tell'd me ye was dast, but I'll ding the d-ffing out o' ye, I'll begin wi' ye as I'm a maid to end wi' ye; poor John sat crying and clawing his legs. Hi, ha- said he, its nae bairns play to be married, I find that already; his mith-in-law came in and made up peace, went to a cooper, and got them a big wooden stoup to carry in their water.

II. Next morning John was sent to the fish market an errand to his father-in-law, who gave him a piece of flesh to carry home, and as he was coming out of the market, he saw fix or seven of the fletcher's dogs fall on and worry at a poor country colley dog: Justice, justice, cries John to the dogs, ye're but a whgen unmannerly raskels, that sa's a on ze poor beast, heth ye sud a be put in the tolbooth, and tane to the baillies, and hang'd for the like o' that, it's perfect murder, and in he runs amongst the dogs, and he hang'd to you a the gither, what's the quarrel? what's the quarrel? John flings down the flesh he had carrying, and grips the colley, who took John for an enemy too, and bites his hands till the blood followed; the whole of the tykes comes on poor John, till down he goes in the dirt amongst their feet, and one of the dogs runs off with his flesh: So John went home both dirty and bloody, without his flesh; tell'd Girzy how it happened, who applied her old plaister, her tang and tongue, made John to curse the very minister that married them, and wish'd he might never do a better turn.

III. Next morning John was sent to the well with the great stoup to bring in water for breakfast, and as he was polling the stoup out of the well, in he tumbels and his head down; the well being narrow, he cou'd na win out; some people passing by chance heard the blunck cying, and runs to his relief, haul'd him out half dead, and helped him home, and after getting a dry fark, he was comforted with the old plaister, her tongue and the hard tangs.

IV. Next day she says, John, I ma' go to the market myself, for if you go, you'll fight wi' the dogs, and let them run awa' wi' ony thing ye buy, so I'll see that ye put on the pot, and ha'e't boiling again I come hame. John promised we'l, but performs very badly. She's no sooner gone, than he puts on the new pot without any water in it, and a good fire to make it

boil, and away he goes to the unhappy well, fills his pout and sets it down, to look at a parcel of boys playing at cat and dog, they persuaded John to take a game with them, on he plays till one of the boys cries, fly John, yonder's your Girzy coming; John runs into the house wth the water, and the pot being red hot on the fire, he turns in the cold water into it, which made the pot flee all in pieces just as she was entering the door: John runs for it, and she runs after him, crying ha'd the thief: some persons stop'd him; she came up, and then she laboured him all the way home, and he crying, O sirs! ye see what it is to be married! but the mother in law made up peace between them.

V. On the next morning she sent him to the water to wash some rows puddings, and turn them on a spindle, showing him how he was to do or he went away: John goes to the water very willingly, and as he turned and wash'd them, he laid them down behind him, where one of his father in-law's big dogs stood, and eat them, as fast as he laid them down, till all was gone but the last one, which he carried home to Gi zy, crying like a child, for which he got a hearty drubbing with the tangs.

VI. His father-in-law next day sent him for a fat calf he had bought, and tied the money in a napkin, for fear he should lose it, and as he was going along a bridge, he meets a man running after a horse, who cries to John to stop the horse; but John not being able, meets him on the bridge, and knocks the horse on the face wth the napkin and money, and the money flew out over the bridge into the water, which made John go home crying bitterly, dreading the old plaister, which he got s^o k^early.

VII. Next morning Girzy sent him again to the bridge to see if he could find any of it in the water, where he found ducks swimming, and ducking down their heads in the water, and he thinking it was his money they pick'd u^p, takes up one of them and rips her up, but found none, then say he, they been looking for't: John strips off his clothes, and leaves them on the hedge, goes in a ducking as they did, in which time a rag-man came past, and carried off his clothes, so he went home, crying all the way, and Girzy applied her old plaister the tangs.

VIII. Next morning she sent him to a farm house for a pigful of butter milk, and as he returned thro' the fields, the farmer's bull and another bull was fighting, the farmer's bull being t^o lose, John runs in behind him, and sets his head to the bull's tail, on purpose to help him to push the other, the bull thinking it some other bull attacking him, fled aside, and the other bull came full drive upon John, push'd him down, broke the pigg, and spilt the milk, so he went home to his old plaister, but being his usual diet, he regarded it the less.

IX. His mither in law, with several auld witty wives, held

a private council on John's conduct and bad luck, and concluded he was bewitched, John was of the same opinion, and went to the minister, and told him to his face that he was the cause of all his misfortune, by putting such a bad bargain into his hand; insisted either to unmarry them again, or send death and the bell man to take her awa', for she had a lump of mischief on her back another on her breast, and the rest o' her body is a clean d—l. The minister began to exhort him to peace and patience, telling him that marriages was made in heaven; ye're a baist liar, Sir, says John, for I was married in your ain kitchen, an a' the black-guards about the town was there, an it had a been heaven they wadna win in. So out he goes, cursing like a mad-man, and throws stanes at the minister's windows, for which he was put twa' hours i' the stocks, and his lump of corruption came and rubbed his lugs, threw his nose, and drove him hame before her.

X. Next morning Girzy set John to his loom, as she saw he was unfit for any i'ther business: but r'ing lang before day, leaving his tormentor asleep in bed, he fell asleep upon his loom, with the candle in his hand, and so set the web, headles, reed, and treadle cords on fire: by chance his old viper looked out of the bed, or the whole house had been gone: up she got, and alarm'd the neighbours, who came to her relief, but poor John underwent a dreadful swabbling for this.

XI. After this Girzy sent John in search of a hen's nest, who had taken some by-place to lay her eggs in, and as poor John was in an auld kila searching about the walls, the kiln-ribs brake, and down he goes with a vengeance into the loggie, and cutted and bruised himself in a terrible manner, and was oblig'd to creep out at the loggie below, scarcely able to get hame, his face and nose running o' blood. When he went home, Girzy pitied him, asking what place of him was fairest? O! said he, Girzy, I'm a' brizzel'd atween the feet. Are ye indeed, quoth she, then I wish ye had broken your neck, that I might gotten anither, useless ae way, and useless mae ways, ye's no be lang here, gang whar ye like.

XII. Now as poor John was turn'd out o' doors next morning, to go awa' hirpling on a staff, one came and told him his mither was dead. Oh hoch, said John, and is my mither clean dead: O an she wad but look down thro' the list, and see how I'm guided this morning, I'm sure she wad send death for me too: I'm out o' a mither, out o' a wife, out o' my health and strength, and a' my warklooms.

So John appealed to a Jedburgh Jury, if it was not easier to deal wi' fools, than headstrong fashions fouks; owns he has but an empty scull; but his mither said he was a bidable bairn, if any body had been learn him.

-F I N I S.

